



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO

Report to the Planning Commission

DATE ISSUED: March 6, 2025 REPORT NO. PC-25-009

HEARING DATE: March 13, 2025

SUBJECT: College Area Community Plan Update Workshop

REFERENCES: [June 10, 2021 – College Area Community Plan Update Workshop I, Report No. PC-21-019](#)
[November 17, 2022 – College Area Community Plan Update Workshop II, Report No. PC-22-040](#)

SUMMARY

This is the third workshop for the Planning Commission to provide input on the College Area Community Plan Update. No action is required on the part of the Planning Commission at this time. This workshop is intended to serve as an opportunity for the Planning Commission to provide input on the [first draft of the College Area Community Plan](#). The updated Community Plan provides additional capacity for homes and mixed-use development along corridors, near SDSU and the Green Line Trolley and bus rapid stations. The updated Community Plan creates opportunities for a diversity of new homes for students, families and seniors. Previous workshops were held with the Planning Commission on June 10, 2021, to review existing conditions and November 17, 2022, to gather input on potential growth locations, recreation opportunities and enhanced mobility ideas.

BACKGROUND

The College Area Community Plan Area is approximately 1,970 acres. The community is bounded on the north by Interstate 8, east by the City of La Mesa and west by Kensington-Talmadge Community and south by the Eastern Area Community. San Diego State University (SDSU) is in the center of the community with a transit center served by an underground Trolley station. College Avenue is the primary north to south gateway connecting El Cajon Boulevard to SDSU and I-8. The community's neighborhoods are bisected by corridors that include El Cajon Boulevard, Collwood Boulevard, College Avenue, Montezuma Road, Reservoir Drive and 70th Street. Alvarado Road also includes the East Campus Medical Center at UC San Diego Health adjacent to a Trolley station. A comprehensive overview of existing conditions in the College Area Community is provided in the [College Area Community Atlas](#).

Housing & Demographics of the College Area

Population

As of 2023, the San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG) estimated that 19,688 people were living in a household within the College Area. Table 1 shows there was a 12 percent increase from the 17,624 people living in the community in 2010 based on SANDAG estimates. SANDAG estimates

an additional 5,189 people live in group quarters in comparison to the 3,037 who lived in group quarters in 2010 – an increase of 171 percent.

Housing

In 2023, the community had approximately 8,098 homes. Table 1 also shows that between 2010 and 2023, the community added 763 homes, a 10 percent increase from the 7,355 homes in 2010. The community had a rate of 2.72 persons per household in 2023, where there were 2.49 in 2010.

Income

In 2023, the median household income was approximately \$67,339. Table 1 shows there was a 55 percent increase from the \$43,341 median household income in 2010 based on SANDAG estimates.

Table 1: College Area Housing and Population between 2010 and 2023

Year	Households Population	Group Quarters Population	Homes	Persons per Household	Income
2010	17,624	3,037	7,355	2.49	\$43,341
2023	19,688	8,226	8,098	2.72	\$67,339
<i>Change</i>	<i>12%</i>	<i>141%</i>	<i>10%</i>	<i>9%</i>	<i>55%</i>

SANDAG 2023 Housing and Population Estimates

Affordable Housing

As of February 2025, the College Area Community had 283 affordable homes that have entered a deed restriction with the San Diego Housing Commission, which is 3.46 percent of the community's total number of homes today. The following are the percent of affordable homes for comparison in adjacent community planning areas: Navajo 3.29 percent of total homes, Eastern area 5.11 percent of total homes, Kensington Talmage 5.73 percent of total homes and City Heights 9.67 percent of total homes.

DISCUSSION

The first draft of the updated College Area Community Plan contains detailed goals, policies, regulations and maps. The contents were developed with input from multiple meetings with the College Area Community Plan Update Subcommittee and key stakeholders and additional input via workshops, surveys, and technical analyses. The purpose of the first draft of the Community Plan is to provide the public with an opportunity for input, which will guide refinements to be integrated into the second draft Community Plan.

Why is the College Area Community Plan being updated?

The current College Area Community Plan, which was adopted in 1989, is being updated to align with citywide policies in the General Plan and the Climate Action Plan. In 2024, the General Plan was comprehensively amended to align the City of Villages land use strategy with climate goals, focusing on the reduction of vehicular travel and corresponding greenhouse gas emissions and the shift from person vehicles to transit, walking, and biking. The College Area Community Plan update is a part of a citywide program to update community plans in locations served by high-frequency public transit consistent with the City of Villages strategy.

What is the Vision and Key Objectives of the Community Plan Update?

The Community Plan Update Subcommittee helped to develop a vision for the College Area to become a college town with vibrant mixed-use corridors, villages and nodes that connect to neighborhoods and San Diego State University and enhance the community based on the following guiding principles:

- Buildings, streets, parks and public spaces that provide places to gather, enhance community identity and promote sustainability and livability.
- Diverse and accessible housing opportunities near the East Campus Medical Center at UC San Diego Health, San Diego State University, transit corridors and activity centers.
- Safe, enjoyable and efficient travel that makes it easy to travel without a car.
- A thriving, sustainable and innovative business district that contributes to community vitality and growth.
- Strong connections to San Diego State University to promote community investment, including start-ups, craft businesses and good jobs.
- Improved air quality, health, recreation and connectivity between neighborhoods, parks, schools, businesses, the East Campus Medical Center at UC San Diego Health and San Diego State University.
- Preserved and expanded parks, open space, natural resources and environmentally sensitive areas.
- A resilient and healthy community powered by renewable energy and an emissions-free transportation system.
- Spaces that support cultural exchange with the community, local businesses, schools, East Campus Medical Center at UC San Diego Health, San Diego State University and other local arts organizations.
- Tree lined mixed-use corridors for people to walk and bike to nearby activity centers including shopping, jobs, schools, transit, parks and San Diego State University.
- New buildings with restaurants, stores, offices and homes that can serve as spaces for people to gather and socialize.
- Opportunities for a variety of new homes for families to move into the community, create opportunities for seniors that wish to downsize and remain in the community and students living near the University.

How does the Draft Community Plan align the City of Villages Land Use Strategy and the Climate Action Plan?

The General Plan's [Village Climate Goal Propensity Map](#) identifies where additional homes and jobs could have the best opportunities to increase the amount of trips taken by transit, bicycling or walking. It shows that the College Area contains some of the highest propensities in the City for residential and commercial mixed-uses (Attachment 1). This is due to existing and planned transit facilities for the College Area, which can best be utilized by increased development, resulting in overall less travel by personal care, which helps meet Climate Action Plan goals. The Community Plan update increases residential densities near the two Trolley Stations and along existing and planned bus rapid transit corridors and cycle-tracks. Providing more homes near high-frequency transit and bike routes is a key strategy to furthering the City's climate goals. It also allows the City to invest in transportation infrastructure that will serve the greatest number of people, allowing for efficient delivery of City infrastructure and municipal services.

How does the Draft Community Plan Reflect the 7-Visions Report?

In April 2020, the Community Plan Update Subcommittee prepared a [report](#) with 7 visions to help shape the future of the College Area which included a focus for new homes on corridors, nodes, and at major activity centers, including near SDSU. The first draft of the College Area Community Plan addresses the community’s 7 visions as follows:

- New capacity for homes is proposed near SDSU and the UCSD Health East Trolley Stations to implement a ‘Campus Town’ that softens the boundary between the community and campus, addresses the need for off-campus housing and increases housing near the trolley so that more trips are taken by transit (Vision 2, Vision 3 and Vision 6).
- New capacity for homes is proposed at major intersections in the community to encourage infill development that creates attractive gateways into the community and facilitates a sense of identity and place (Vision 1 and Vision 5).
- Major corridors are proposed to allow new capacity for homes, while reserving additional space for pedestrian amenities - include transit priority measures and an expanded bicycle network - to encourage walking, biking and transit trips and improve mobility (Vision 1 and Vision 2).
- Provision of regulations that provide new public spaces as well as parkway improvements along Montezuma Road to create an attractive pedestrian area with recreational value along Montezuma Road (Vision 4, Vision 5 and Vision 6).
- Approximately 84 percent of existing single-family zoned homes are not proposed to change (Vision 7); changes are proposed to single-family areas where most of the homes currently consist of high-occupancy student housing, indicating strong demand for off-campus student housing and a high likelihood of a ‘Campus Town’ developing (Vision 3).

How many additional homes does the Community Plan Update propose?

The update provides an opportunity for an additional 18,700 homes beyond the current adopted (Table 2) capacity along existing and planned bus rapid transit corridors such as El Cajon Boulevard and Montezuma Avenue as well as the two trolley stations. The Community Plan Update accommodates a variety of housing types that meet the needs of a diverse range of people. Acknowledging the demand for housing allows for a comprehensive plan for orderly development to meet the needs of College Area community members. It is also important to note that the Community Plan does not require any new development to happen. New development will only happen when the demand materializes, and economic conditions allow.

Table 2 College Area Planned Land Uses Estimated Buildout (Number of Homes)

<i>Land Use Category</i>	<i>Adopted Community Plan</i>	<i>Proposed Community Plan Update</i>	<i>Difference</i>
<i>Muti-Family</i>	13,200	32,700	+19,500
<i>Single-Family</i>	3,500	2,700	-800
<i>Total</i>	16,700	35,400	+18,700

Plan update identifies Class II separated bike lanes and low-stress bike routes on secondary streets to help facilitate internal connections within the community.

How does the Draft Community Plan align with the Regional Plan?

The Community Plan incorporates the proposed SANDAG 2025 Regional Plan's transportation network. The Regional Plan proposes Green Line Trolley enhancements, expanded Rapid bus routes and increased transit frequency. These investments align with the College Area Community Plan's mobility goals by supporting sustainable growth, reducing reliance on single-occupancy vehicles and fostering safer, more connected streets. The Regional Plan identifies Next Generation Bus Rapid Transit with dedicated transit lanes along Montezuma Road, Collwood Boulevard, on the western segment of El Cajon Boulevard up to College Avenue and on the eastern segment of El Cajon Boulevard from Montezuma Road. The Community Plan update also supports transit priority measures (e.g. transit signals and queue jumps) and other transit amenities (e.g. shelters, seating and lighting)

How does the Community Plan Update Plan for Additional Public Space?

The Community Plan update proposes supplemental development regulations as part of a Community Plan Implementation Overlay Zone – Type A to require developments to provide public space with amenities. Developments that construct on-site park improvements can be provided as an alternative to the public space requirement. Supplemental development regulations would also require development along Montezuma Road, College Avenue and El Cajon Boulevard to provide a promenade area, with a minimum width of 8-feet, beyond the public right-of-way to expand and improve the pedestrian experience.

How does the Community Plan Update Plan for Additional Park and Recreational Space?

The College Area Community Plan Update identifies opportunities for new parks and recreation spaces to be built when new homes are developed throughout the life of the plan. This can be achieved through the provision of new parks, trails, plazas, as well as public spaces with recreational amenities as part of future development. The Community Plan Update encourages continued joint-use agreements with schools and the potential for work with SDSU to increase access to recreational spaces, explores the possibility of new recreation on land that the City owns, encourages excess right-of-way to be utilized for green space and supports land acquisition and the development of new parks. The Community Plan update identifies the following potential park and recreational improvements that would need additional analysis and coordination prior to implementation.

The proposed parks, trails and recreation spaces in the Community Plan Update are planned to maximize the recreation opportunities that will serve the increasing number of community residents. While new parks and recreation investments are not all specifically identified in the Community Plan, it allows for and facilitates the continual process of identifying additional future opportunities that may become available as the community plan area develops. As more homes are built, based on the development activity, location, and needs of the residents that new facilities would serve, the City will continually work to identify, plan, and deliver more park and recreation facilities as housing capacity is built and occupied during the 30-year planning horizon.

How does the Community Plan Update Consider Fire Safety?

The portions of the College Area are within a very high fire hazard severity hazard zone due to proximity to canyons, however, the community is served by multiple fire stations in adjacent communities including Fire Station 10 on 62nd Street in the Eastern Area and five others within 1.5 miles of the community. The Community Plan Update located higher density areas along major corridors and near transit that are primarily outside the very high fire hazard severity hazard zones. The Fire-Rescue Department conducts a Standards of Response Coverage review to determine the need for additional fire stations by reviewing the adequacy of the current fire station resource deployment system and the risks to be protected. Typically, a three-mile distance between fire stations is sufficient to achieve response time objectives. The Community Plan Update contains policies to support building a new station, or upgrades to existing stations if it is determined that is needed to meet response coverage thresholds.

Will the Community Plan Area Boundary be Adjusted as Part of the Community Plan Update?

A request was made by the Kensington-Talmadge Community Planning Group to amend the boundary to include the area west of Collwood Boulevard as part of the Kensington-Talmadge Community Plan Area (Attachment 2), The City Planning Department recommends retaining the residential areas within the College Area Community Planning Area due a stronger connection and access to the College Area. The City Planning Department supports moving the designated open space parcel adjacent to Montezuma Road to the Kensington-Talmadge Community Plan Area. The amended boundary would be reflected in the second draft of the Community Plan.

What Type of Community Engagement has been Conducted?

The College Area CPU Committee was formed in April 2020 and has hosted 20 public meetings (in-person and online) to discuss existing conditions and issues, overall goals and policies and concepts for land use, mobility and urban design. Staff received additional input via workshops, surveys and technical analyses. In 2020, an online survey addressed mobility, homes and parks and public spaces with the findings summarized into a [survey report](#). In 2020, an online survey provided feedback on locations for new homes and public spaces. Staff held office hours at the College-Rolando Library to give stakeholders an opportunity to learn more about the Community Plan Update for 38 total hours during June 2022. Staff held an open house event in June 2022 at the College Avenue Baptist Church to showcase the concepts that had been developed for land use, urban design, parks and mobility.

What Type of Feedback has Staff Received Regarding the First Draft Updated College Area Community Plan?


Since the release of the first draft of the College Area Community Plan on January 10, 2025, staff has received feedback that generally focuses on proposed density, recreational needs, infrastructure needs, fire and safety and implementation. Comments have addressed concerns with the amount of increased capacity and proposed densities as well as for allowing more home capacity to be planned along the main corridors, near SDSU and near the Trolley stations. Other comments have indicated that the Complete Communities Housing Solutions density bonus program should be suspended after the community plan is updated. Comments also have indicated a desire for more parks, including trails, trailheads, play equipment and dog parks. Comments have been critical of the proposed reduction in vehicle travel lanes along Montezuma Road, but other comments have stated a desire for more dedicated transit lanes and cycle tracks. Community members have expressed a desire to

see increased vehicle parking at the College-Rolando Library. Comments have expressed a desire for a new fire station in the College Area for evacuation routes to be addressed in the next draft Community Plan. The College Area Community Planning Group is expected to provide comments to the City following their March 10, 2025 meeting, and staff will provide a verbal update at the Planning Commission hearing.

CONCLUSION

Staff will consider input from the Planning Commission, Mobility Board, Park & Recreation Board, Historical Resources Board, College Area Community Planning Group, the public and other stakeholders before releasing the second draft updated College Area Community Plan. Staff anticipates releasing the second draft Community Plan and supporting mobility report in summer 2025. Staff will seek a recommendation from the College Area Community Planning Group before beginning the public hearing process in Fall 2025. Documents relating to the College Area Community Plan Update process are available on the following website: plancollegearea.org.

Respectfully submitted,



Nathen Causman
Senior Planner
City Planning Department



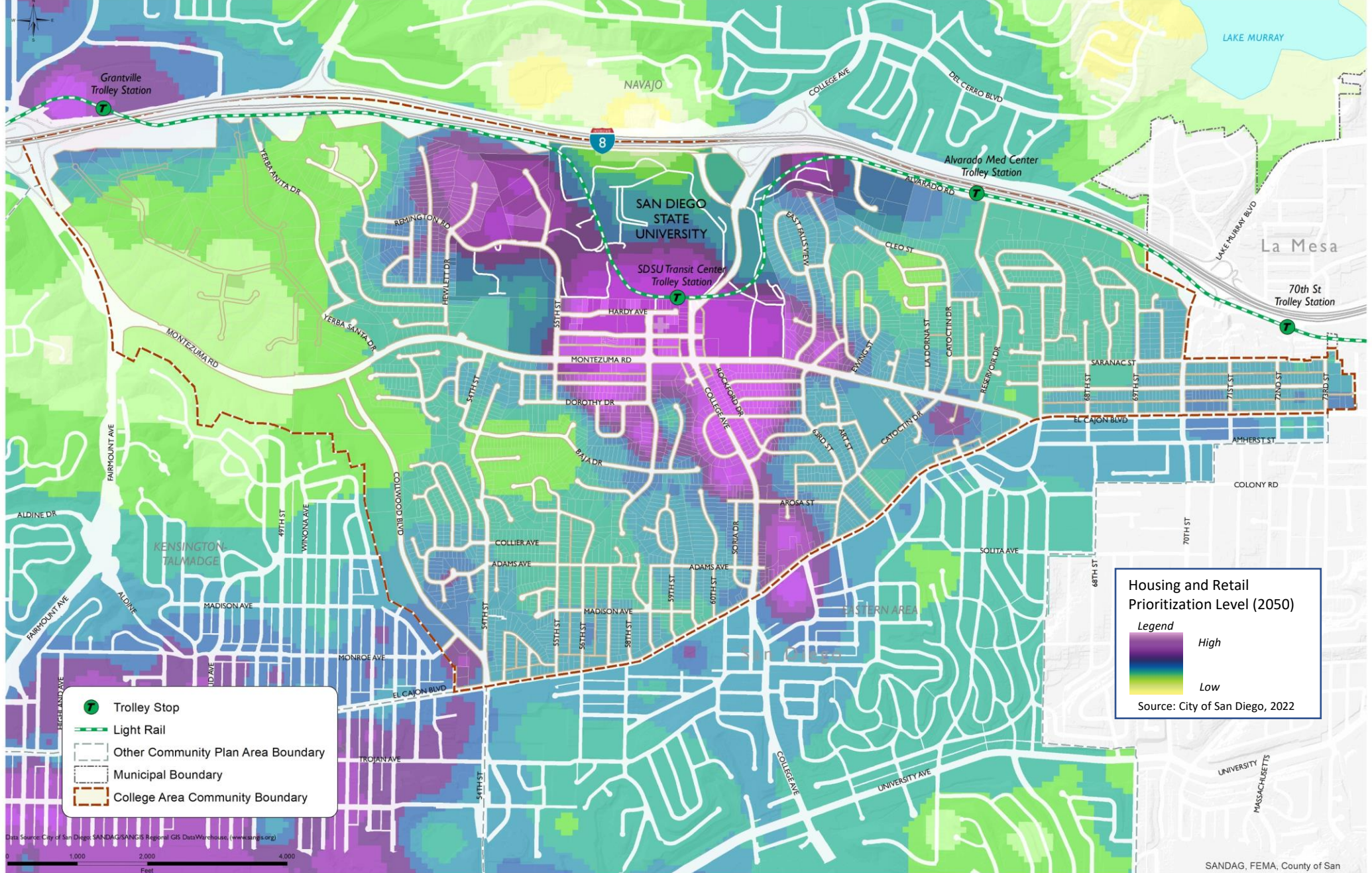
Coby Tomlins
Program Manager
City Planning Department



Tait Galloway
Deputy Director
City Planning Department

Attachments:

1. College Area Village Climate Goal Propensity
2. Proposed Boundary Adjustment for College Area Community Plan Area and Kensington-Talmadge Community Plan Area



Housing and Retail Prioritization Level (2050)

Legend

High

Low

Source: City of San Diego, 2022

Trolley Stop

Light Rail

Other Community Plan Area Boundary

Municipal Boundary

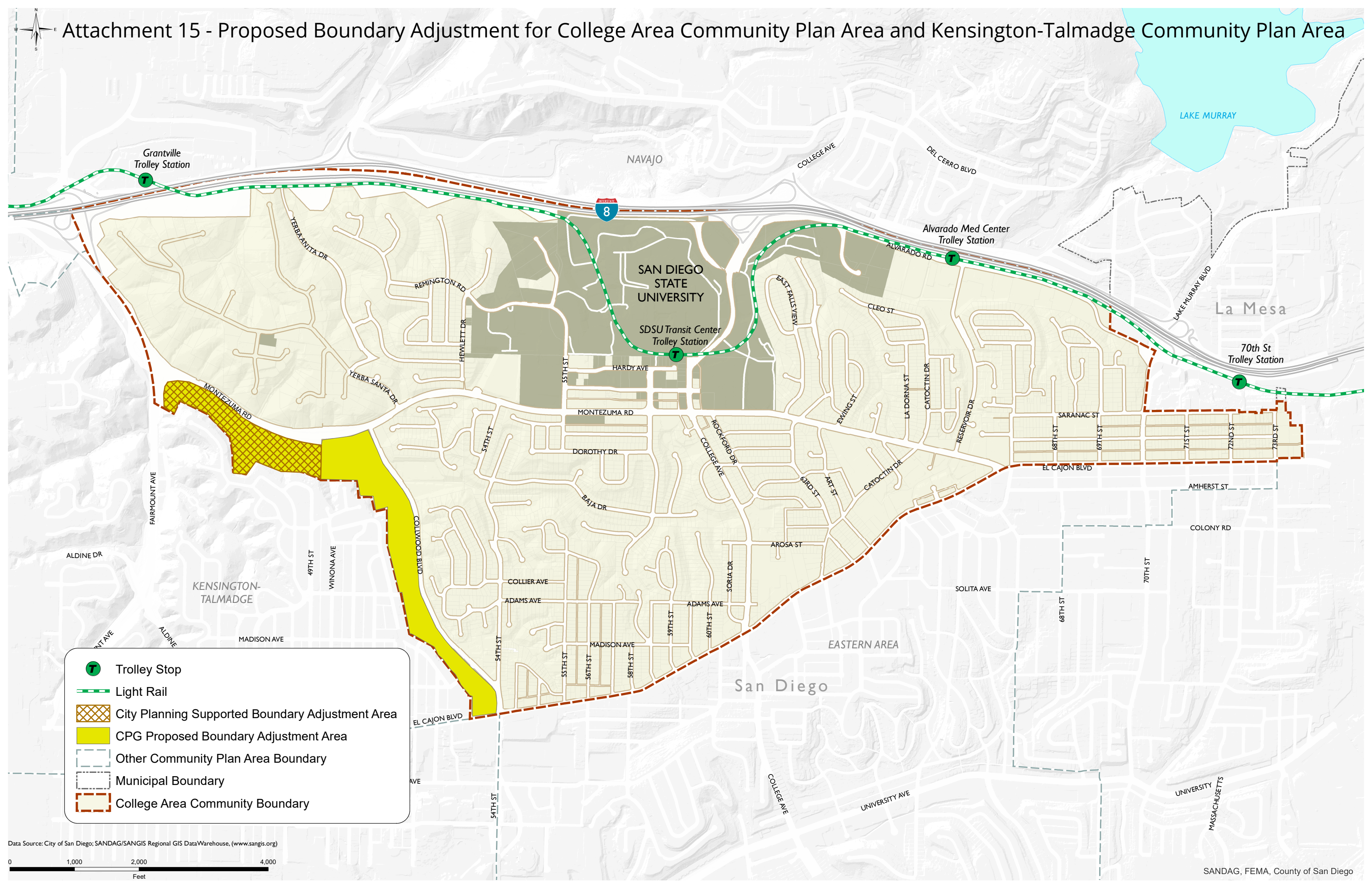
College Area Community Boundary








Data Source: City of San Diego SANDAG/SANGIS Regional GIS Data Warehouse (www.sangis.org)

0 1,000 2,000 4,000

Feet

Attachment 15 - Proposed Boundary Adjustment for College Area Community Plan Area and Kensington-Talmadge Community Plan Area



-  Trolley Stop
-  Light Rail
-  City Planning Supported Boundary Adjustment Area
-  CPG Proposed Boundary Adjustment Area
-  Other Community Plan Area Boundary
-  Municipal Boundary
-  College Area Community Boundary

Data Source: City of San Diego; SANDAG/SANGIS Regional GIS DataWarehouse, (www.sangis.org)

